

JOHN BOOZMAN

United States Senator *for* ARKANSAS

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Boozman Bulletin: Improving Veterans' Community Care

Our nation's veterans were promised access to healthcare for their service and sacrifice. Today the Senate took action to uphold that pledge, by passing S.2372, the *John S. McCain III, Daniel K. Akaka and Samuel R. Johnson VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act*, or the *VA MISSION Act* for short. This legislation strengthens the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare services and streamlines its community care programs.

I was [proud to support this legislation](#) that consolidates and improves VA community care programs so veterans will have access to healthcare and services in their own communities. Under this legislation, a veteran and his or her doctor will decide where that veteran will receive care—taking into consideration the veteran's healthcare needs and the availability and quality of both VA and community care. The *VA MISSION Act* also improves the VA's ability to hire high-quality healthcare professionals, expands VA caregiver benefits to veterans of all generations and creates a process to evaluate and reform VA facilities so they can best serve veterans. It also includes funding for the Choice Program so veterans will have access to care while we transition to an easier-to-use community care program.

The *VA MISSION Act* builds on the ideas proposed in a bill I supported in the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee last year that aimed to improve community healthcare for our veterans. This is a something we've sought to accomplish for several years.



In 2014, Congress created the Veterans Choice Program in response to a crisis of long wait times at VA hospitals. It addressed many shortcomings within the VA system, but we knew this was just the first of many steps needed to fix systemic problems that had been plaguing the VA and



Listening session with Arkansas veterans in Mena.

failing our veterans.

I've worked with my colleagues and veterans to improve on this foundation. Last year, I

launched a listening tour to [hear from Arkansas veterans](#) about their experiences with the Choice Program so we can better meet their needs. These discussions helped inform my contributions to the *VA MISSION Act*.

In addition to the improvements to VA healthcare delivery, the *VA MISSION Act* will also provide better insight into how the VA spends money on veterans' healthcare, enabling us to conduct better and more consistent oversight. As the chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, this is a priority for me. We must ensure the VA is efficiently and effectively providing veterans' healthcare whether that care takes place in a VA facility or elsewhere in the community.

This bill is a great example of what can be accomplished through bipartisan, bicameral compromise. Now that the Senate and House passed this legislation, it's headed to President Trump's desk to be signed into law, giving our veterans access to the quality care they deserve.

Quick Takes:

- **Reforming Water Infrastructure Investment:** I've been building support in Congress for the *Securing Required Funding for Water Infrastructure Now (SRF WIN) Act*, legislation that would modernize investment in water infrastructure. I'm pleased that the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee [included my legislation as a provision](#) in its comprehensive bill to address shortfalls in our nation's water infrastructure. The EPW Committee unanimously passed the bill on Tuesday.
- **Honoring Law Enforcement:** In 1962, Congress passed a joint resolution establishing the week of May 15 as National Police Week to pay special recognition to law enforcement officers who tragically lost their lives in the line of duty. The names of those men and women who paid the ultimate sacrifice are etched on the walls of the National Law Enforcement Memorial. Each year during this week, families and colleagues of the fallen travel to our nation's capital for this fitting tribute. I [honored those Arkansans](#) whose names are newly carved on the memorial and recognized the service and sacrifice of members of the law enforcement community.
- **Urging VA to Improve Money Management & Transparency:** As chairman of the Senate Appropriations Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Subcommittee, I'm [conducting oversight](#) on how the VA spends taxpayer dollars to ensure there is funding to meet the needs of our veterans.
- **Withdrawing U.S. from Iran Nuclear Agreement:** Given what we know about Iran's behavior and the inherent weakness of the nuclear accord, I support the president's decision to [terminate the agreement and reimpose sanctions on Iran](#).
- **Defending Catfish Inspections:** Inspections by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety Inspection Service have improved the safety of our food supply since 2016. I support this safeguard and joined the [Arkansas Congressional Delegation in a letter](#) urging U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer to defend this program against attacks by foreign countries.
- **Supporting Small Businesses:** Congressman Bruce Westerman and I recently recognized Arkansas small businesses and the role they play in our economy on our

'Talk Small Ya'll' Small Business Tour. We listened to business owners, managers, employees and other key figures about what they are seeing and experiencing in today's economy and we asked for their input on how to make it easier for small businesses to grow and thrive. [Here is a recap](#) of our tour.

- **Working in the Senate:** It's an honor to represent you. I'm working hard to use the power of this office for good, help make your life better and ensure that future generations will enjoy the many benefits our state and country have to offer. We put together [this video](#) to show you what a typical day in the Senate is like.
- **Encouraging Civic Involvement:** This school year my office launched our inaugural Congressional Youth Cabinet, a nonpartisan initiative that has allowed young people first-hand experience to engage in the democratic process. My goal is that this program will foster a lifetime commitment to civic engagement and public service. We're [accepting applications for next year's program](#). Students who will be high school juniors during the 2018-2019 school year are eligible to participate.
- **Helping Arkansans:** Mobile offices are an important component in our outreach efforts so we can ensure that Arkansans who live in communities across the state can benefit from our assistance. My staff is hosting mobile office events in May in Ash Flat and Waldron. Get [more information about these events here](#). You're invited to come and speak with my staff. They'll be happy to help you.
- **Connect on Social Media:** Stay up to date with what I'm doing for Arkansans via social media. You can find me on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).



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